Number 4

ENGLISH CLASSIC SERIES

WITH AIDS IN TEACHING

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A Christmas Carol

By
Charles
Dickens

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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BEING A GHOST STORY OF
CHRISTMAS

ABRIDGED

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH AIDS IN TEACHING

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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EDITOR "CANADIAN TEACHER"

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INTRODUCTION.

"Who can listen to objections regarding such a book as this? It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it a personal kindness."—*Thackeray.*

"In December, 1843, all England was aroused from its selfish slumbering by the sound of a carol. It was no carol sung by a bird; it was sung by a man, and that man was Charles Dickens. He called it A Christmas Carol; but the Anglo-Saxon world has known it ever since as "The Christmas Carol," as if, since the birth of Him who made the 25th of December a holiday, humanity had known no song worthy of being likened unto it. Thirty-eight years this carol has been sung, and yet every twelve-month its pure melody receives as hearty a welcome as Christmas itself. Hungry ears have listened to no better hymn of praise; hungry eyes have feasted on no truer or more loving counsel."—*Kate Field.*

PREFATORY NOTE.

The *Christmas Carol*, the first of a long series of Christmas stories by Charles Dickens, published in December, 1843, was hailed on every side with enthusiastic greeting. It was the work of such odd moments of leisure as were left while writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens has told us of what befell him in its composition, with what a strange mastery it seized him for itself, how he wept over it, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself to an extraordinary degree, and how he walked thinking of it fifteen and twenty miles about the back streets of London, and many and many a night after all sober folks had gone to bed. And when it was done, as he told his friend, President Felton, of Harvard College, he let himself loose like

a madman. For these sixty-three years the *Carol* has kept its popularity. While Dickens lived, hundreds of letters were written to him by people in humble circumstances telling him amid many confidences, about their homes, how the *Carol* was read there aloud, and was kept upon a little shelf by itself, and did them no end of good. No sweeter, healthier or more cheerful work of fiction has ever been written for young people, or old ones too for that matter. When we remember the *Carol* and other Christmas stories by Dickens have been sold by the hundreds of thousands, how shall we estimate the effect they have had in teaching lessons of fellowship and charity, in making the happy season of Christmas time more sacred and more cherished, and in furnishing examples of courage, patience, generosity, and noble feeling ?

LIFE OF DICKENS.

CHARLES DICKENS was born in the little village of Landport, near Portsmouth, England, February 7, 1812. Four years later his parents moved to Chatham, and here in due time Charles was sent to a private school. He early developed a fondness for reading, and when only nine years old had read *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and several of the early English novels. About this time, too, he made an attempt at original writing, his first effort being a tragedy based on one of the tales from *Arabian Nights*. This early work has no literary value, and is only of interest as foreshadowing the future author.

When Charles was ten years old, his father, who was a clerk in the pay office of the Navy, lost his position, and was arrested and imprisoned for debt. The boy, though so young, was placed in a blacking factory, where he pasted labels on the bottles of blacking. His life at this time was cheerless and wretched in the extreme, and he could never bear in after life to refer to this early bitter experience. After a time his father was released from prison, and secured a position as reporter on the *Morning Herald*, but the family was still very poor. They now moved to Camden Town, and Charles was again placed at school. A few years later he left school and entered a lawyer's office as clerk, but he had not taste for this work, and taught himself shorthand, with the idea of becoming a journalist. At the age of seventeen he became a reporter at Doctors' Commons, a court building in London. When he was twenty-two years old he succeeded

in securing a position as reporter on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, of London. His work required him to travel all over England, collecting items of news and writing up such incidents as are now telegraphed to the papers daily by local reporters. As there were no railroads at this time, he went by stage-coach from place to place, and in this way he mingled with the people and saw every phase of life. While thus engaged he began to contribute original papers to the *Monthly Magazine*. These first sketches brought him no income, but they enabled him to arrange with the editor of the *Evening Chronicle* to write literary articles for that paper, while reporting for the *Morning Chronicle*. His contributions to the *Evening Chronicle* were signed "Boz," and they were afterwards collected and published as *Sketches by Boz*. In March, 1836, the first number of *Pickwick Papers* appeared. These articles brought him fame and fortune, and he soon became the most popular writer of English fiction.

The events and surroundings of Dickens' own early life, the people he met, and the places he visited as a reporter, constantly appear in his novels and stories. Camden Town, for instance, the home of the Cratchits in the *Christmas Carol*, was his own home, their poverty his own poverty, and their Christmas dinner was just such a one as the Christmas dinners of his childhood.

The most striking characteristic of Dickens is the skill with which he seizes upon some peculiar trait or quality in one of his characters, exaggerates it, and keeps it always before his readers until all other traits and qualities are forgotten, and that character becomes the very personification of that one peculiar quality. This is called caricaturing,

and Dickens was such a master of this art, that the very names of his leading characters have become a part of our language, and stand as synonyms for their respective peculiarities. We can to-day give no better idea of a miser than to call him a Scrooge, and of a hard master than to call him a Tackleton.

Nearly every novel was written with some distinct good purpose. The student can easily see the purpose in the *Christmas Carol*. *Oliver Twist* exposed the custom of training boys to commit crime ; *Nicholas Nickleby* called attention to the cruel treatment of boys in cheap boarding-schools; *Hard Times* shows the sufferings of the factory hands; *Bleak House*, one of his strongest novels, pictures the position of wards in Chancery and the slow process of law in England at that time; *Little Dorrit* shows the horrors of the debtors' prison. *David Copperfield* is supposed to describe his own life.

Dickens was universally popular. The queen offered him a title of nobility, but he declined, saying that he wished to be remembered by no other name than that of Charles Dickens. He continued to write until the very day of his death, and left unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which promised to be one of his best novels. He died suddenly on the 8th of June, 1870, and the nation paid him homage by burying him in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

STAVE ONE.

MARLEY'S GHOST.

MARLEY was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to.

Old Marley was as dead as a door nail. Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley.

Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintery weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer

than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather; foggy withal; and he could hear the people, in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighboring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that, although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open, that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who, in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his

white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

"A Merry Christmas, uncle ! God save you !" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah !" said Scrooge. "Humbug !"

"Christmas a humbug, uncle ?" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure ?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas ! What right have you to be merry ? What reason have you to be merry ? You're poor enough."

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this ? Merry Christmas ! Out upon Merry Christmas ! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books, and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you ? If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle !" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew," returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it !" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you ! Much good it has ever done you !"

"I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it came round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know, of the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures, bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, 'God bless it!'"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark forever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*," said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come, dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge. "Good afternoon."

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you. Why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"And, a Happy New Year."

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

The clerk, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word, "liberality," Scrooge frowned and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons, union workhouses, and other establishments—they cost enough—and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen."

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labor with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping

slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterward, as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense.

Foggier yet, and colder ! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good St. Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol : but at the first sound of

> "God bless you, merry gentlemen,
> May nothing you dismay !"

Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of actio that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog, and even more congenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose ?" said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound."

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning."

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honor of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's book, went home to bed.

He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of buildings, up a yard, where it had little business to be. It was old enough now, and dreary enough; for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands.

Now it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not

bestowed one thought on Marley since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change, not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow, as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air, and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid color, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face, and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said, "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

Up Scrooge went to his rooms. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But, before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall; lumber-room as usual—old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in—double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat, put on his dressing-gown and slippers and his night-cap, and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel.

As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell—a disused bell—that hung in the room, and communicated, for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below, as if some persons were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight toward his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His color changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him! Marley's ghost!" and then fell again.

The same face; the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights, and boots; and tassels on the latter bristling like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head.

The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

"How now," said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "What do you want with me?"

"Much!"—Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I *was*."

"Who *were* you, then ?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You're particular for a shade." He was going to say "to a shade," but substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

"Mercy !" he said. "Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me ?"

"Man of the worldly mind !" replied the Ghost, "do you believe in me or not ?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me ?"

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me !—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness !"

The spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung its shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why."

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to *you* ?"

"Jacob," he said imploringly, "old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!"

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of

men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all that is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me !—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me !

"Oh ! captive, bound, and double-ironed," cried the phantom, "not to know that ages of incessant labor, by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused ! Yet such was I ! Oh ! such was I !"

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

"Business !" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business !"

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

"At this time of the rolling year," the spectre said, "I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down and never raise them to that blessed star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode ! Were there no

poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me*?"

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone. I am here to-night to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge. "Thank'ee."

"You will be haunted," resumed the Ghost, "by three spirits."

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

"Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?" he demanded, in a faltering voice.

"It is."

'I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the Ghost, "you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls one."

"Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?" hinted Scrooge.

"Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us."

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces

of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

The spectre floated out upon the bleak, dark night. Scrooge followed to the window, closed it, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug !" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the invisible world, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose, went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

STAVE TWO.

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

WHEN Scrooge awoke, it was so dark that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavoring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighboring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment, the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve ! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve !

He touched the spring of his repeater, to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve, and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been, if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought and thought it over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavored not to think, the more he thought.

Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three-quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour had passed.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a dose unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

"Ding, dong!"

"The hour itself," said Scrooge, triumphantly, "and nothing else!"

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy *one*. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn. Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them—as close to it as I am now

to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure, like a child; yet not so like a child as an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white, and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was *not* its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered, now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness; being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the

very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

"Are you the spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am."

The voice was soft and gentle—singularly low, as if, instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long past?" inquired Scrooge, observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Scrooge then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare," said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

"Your reclamation, then. Take heed!"

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

"Rise, and walk with me!"

He rose; but finding that the spirit made toward the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this."

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The

darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here."

"You recollect the way?" inquired the spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge, with fervor, "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years," observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognizing every gate and post and tree, until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting toward them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other until the broad fields were so full of merry music that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them? Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past? Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and byways for their several homes? What was Merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon Merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

"The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables, and the coach-houses and sheds were overrun with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savor in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door—no, not

a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

The spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man in foreign garments, wonderfully real and distinct to look at, stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading by the bridle an ass laden with wood.

"Why, it's Ali Baba !" Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba ! Yes, yes, I know. One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come for the first time, just like that. Poor boy ! And Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother Orson; there they go ! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the gate of Damascus; don't you see him ? And the sultan's groom turned upside down by the genii; there he is upon his head ! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had *he* to be married to the princess !"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying, and to see his heightened and excited face, would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city indeed.

"There's the Parrot !" cried Scrooge. "Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is ! Poor Robin Crusoe, he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't.

It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and cried again.

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff—"but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand, saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew large at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and, with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously toward the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother," said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes," said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like heaven. He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said 'Yes, you should;' and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man," said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but first we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, toward the door; and he, nothing loath to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there;" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best parlor that ever was seen, where the maps upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on

to the top of the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-by right willingly; and, getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep, the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered" said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart."

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I will not gainsay it, spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew."

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind, and answered briefly, "Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here, too, it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Wasn't I apprenticed here?"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk that, if he had been two inches taller, he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried out in great excitement:

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer. Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say Jack Robinson!"

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had 'em up in their places—four, five, six—barred 'em and pinned 'em seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs.

Fezziwig, one vast, substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid with her cousin the baker. In came the cook with her brother's particular friend the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couples at once, hands half round, and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter especially provided for that purpose. But, scorning rest, upon his reappearance he instantly began again, though there were no dances yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter, and he were a brand-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of cold roast, and there was a great piece of cold boiled,

and there were mince pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind, the sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too, with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

When the clock struck eleven this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds, which were under a counter in the back shop.

During the whole of this time Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burned very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig; and when he had done so, said:

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money—three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former not his latter, self, "it isn't that, spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up; what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the spirit's glance, and stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?" the Ghost insisted.

"No," said Scrooge. "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish, and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face in which, in some strange way, there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!"

In the struggle—if it can be called a struggle in which the Ghost, with no visible resistance on its own part, was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary—Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting

that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force he could not hide the light which streamed from under it in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed, and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

STAVE THREE.

THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

AWAKING in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of one. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the special purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger despatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands, and, lying down again, established a sharp lookout all round the bed; for he wished to challenge the spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous.

I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the bell struck one, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour. At last he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room, from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly, and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green that it looked a perfect grove, from every part of which bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney as that dull petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of t rone, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat,

sucking pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince pies, plum puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see: who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in, and know me better, man."

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free—free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanor, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on

compulsion, and I learned a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

"Touch my robe."

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant, kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses, whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snow-storms.

There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavored to diffuse in vain.

For the people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee, calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right, and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory.

But soon the steeples called good people all to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gaiest faces. And at the same time there

emerged from scores of by-streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good-humor was restored directly. For they said it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up, and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven, where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavor in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's), that, notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stood beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to hi robe; and on the threshold of the door the spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that ! Bob had but fifteen "bob" a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name, and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house.

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into a saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honor of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelled the goose, and known it for their own ; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onions, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collar nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes, bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father, then ?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim ! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour."

"Here's Martha, mother," said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother," cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah ! There's *such* a goose, Martha !"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are !" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with official zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother."

"Well, never mind, so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye !"

"No, no. There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide !"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three foot of comforter, exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame !

"Why, where's our Martha ?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming !" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and

had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke, so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer, Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered

phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried "Hurrah!"

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the younger Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and onions to the eyebrows. But now the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard and stolen it while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid. All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day—that was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next to that—that was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half or half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedecked with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts upon the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle—

meaning half a one—and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass—two tumblers and a custard cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed :

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us !"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one !" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool.

Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future the child will die."

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh, no, kind spirit ! say he will be spared. "

"If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. What then ? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until

you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die ? It may be that, in the sight of Heaven, you are worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh, God ! to hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust !"

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily on hearing his own name.

"Mr. Scrooge !" said Bob. "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast !"

"The founder of the feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children—Christmas Day."

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert ! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow !"

"My dear, was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him ! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt."

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the ogre

of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business, and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collar, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favor when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collar so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and, by and bye, they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes very scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the

time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

By this time it was getting dark and snowing pretty heavily; and, as Scrooge and the spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlors, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cozy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There, all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows, on the window-blinds, of guests assembling; and there, a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbor's house, where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter—artful witches, well they knew it—in a glow.

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were a burial place of giants.

"What place is this?" asked Scrooge.

"A place where miners live," returned the spirit.

A light shone from the window of the hut, and swiftly they advanced toward it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled around a glowing fire—an old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation

beyond that, all decked out in their holiday attire. The old man was singing them a Christmas song—it had been a very old song when he was a boy—and from time to time they all joined in the chorus.

The spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rock, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. But even here, two men who watched the light wished each other a Merry Christmas in their can of grog, and one of them struck up a sturdy song that was like a gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, until, being far away, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the lookout in the bow, the officers who had the watch; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath, to his companion, of some by-gone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his nephew's, and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

"Ha, ha! laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blessed in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce me to him, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way, holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions, Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out lustily.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it, too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly.

Bless those women! they never do anything by halves.

She was very pretty, exceedingly pretty, with a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory.

"He's a comical fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece. "At least you always tell *me* so."

"What of that, my dear? said Scrooge's nephew. "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any

good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha !—that he is ever going to benefit us with it."

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters and all the other ladies expressed the same opinion.

"Oh, I have !" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims ? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence ? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner," interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same; and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner, and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

"Well, I am very glad to hear it," said Scrooge's nephew, "because I haven't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper ?" Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister—the plump one with the lace tucker, not the one with the roses—blushed.

"Do go on, Fred," said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. "He never finishes what he begins to say. He is such a ridiculous fellow !"

Scrooge's nephew revelled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off, though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar, his example was unanimously followed.

"I was going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying, 'Uncle Scrooge, how are you ?' If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, *that's* something ; and I think I shook him yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now, at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle, joyously.

After tea they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about when they sung a glee or catch, I can assure you ; especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits ; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas. when its mighty Founder was a child Himself. Stop ! There was a game of blindman's buff. Of course there was.

There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did

Scrooge; for wholly forgetting, in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed right, too ; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye, was not sharper than Scrooge ; blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favor that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the spirit said could not be done.

He and the spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The spirit stood beside sick-beds, and they were cheerful ; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope ; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night ; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a Children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that his hair was gray.

"Are spirits' lives so short ?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three-quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe it brought two children, wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"O Man, look here! Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too in their humility.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit, are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom,

unless the writing be erased. Deny it !" cried the spirit, stretching out its hand toward the city. "Slander those who tell it ye ! Admit to for your factious purposes, and make it worse ! And bide the end !"

"Have they no refuge or resource ?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons ?" said the spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no work-houses ?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground toward him.

STAVE FOUR.

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

THE Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which the spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrowded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled

him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come," said Scrooge.

The spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"Ghost of the future," he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen ! But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me ?"

It gave no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

"Lead on !" said Scrooge. "Lead on ! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, spirit !"

The Phantom moved away as it had come toward him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city, for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and compass them of its own act. But there they were in the heart of it—on 'Change amongst the merchants, who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals, and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die ?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him ?" asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff box. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money ?" asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with the large chin, yawning again. "Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to *me*. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognized its situation and its bad repute.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal were bought. Upon the floor within were piled up heaps of rusty nails, keys, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds.

Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a gray-haired rascal, nearly seventy-five years of age, who had screened himself from the cold air without by a frouzy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters hung upon a line, and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man just as a woman with a heavy

bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

"Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better place," said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. "Come into the parlor. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two ain't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it skreeks!"

The parlor was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night) with the stem of his pipe, put it into his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool, crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds, then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this ; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced *his* plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found that there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next ?"

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you ask me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal, and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this ?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains !"

"Ah," returned the woman, laughing, and leaning forward on her crossed arms, "bed-curtains."

"You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there ?" said Joe.

"Yes, I do," replied the woman. "Why not ?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as *he* was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman, coolly. "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

"Ha, ha !" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. "This is the end of it, you see. He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead. Ha, ha, ha !"

"Spirit," said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot, "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now If there is any person in town who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge, quite agonized, "show that person to me, spirit, I beseech you !"

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing ; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness, for she walked up and down the room, started at every sound, looked out from the window,

glanced at the clock, tried, but in vain, to work with her needle, and could hardly bear the voices of her children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door and met her husband, a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire, and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

"Is it good," she said, "or bad ?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined ?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents, she said, amazed, "there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature, if her face spoke truth ; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry ; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

"What the half-drunken woman, whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay, and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me, turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred ?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money ; and even though we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline !"

Yes, soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed, and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter ; and it was a happier house for this man's death. The only emotion that the Ghost could show him caused by the event was one of pleasure.

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell we what man was that whom we saw lying dead ?"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before—though at a different time, he thought indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the future—into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

"This court," said Scrooge, "through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be in days to come."

The spirit stopped ; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

"The house is yonder," Scrooge exclaimed. "Why do you point away ?"

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his.

The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look around before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses ; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying ; fat with repleted appetite—a worthy place.

The spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one. He advanced toward it, trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw some new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of the things that may be, only ?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me."

The spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept toward it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name—"Ebenezer Scrooge."

"Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, spirit! Oh, no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at his robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it, "your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life?"

The kind hand trembled.

"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the past, the present, and the future. The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bed-post.

STAVE FIVE.

THE END OF IT.

YES, and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends in.

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms ; "they are not torn do n, rings and all."

His hands were busy with his garments all this time, turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, teari g them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do," cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath, and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody ! A Happy New Year to all the world ! Hallo here ! Whoop ! Hallo !"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there, perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in," cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. "There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered. There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat. There's the window where I saw the wandering spirits. It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha !"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh—the father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs.

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever

heard. Clash, clash, hammer ; ding, dong, bell ! Bell, dong, ding ; hammer, clang, clash ! Oh, glorious, glorious !

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist ; clear, bright, jovial, stirring cold ; cold, piping for the blood to dance to ; golden sunlight ; heavenly sky ; sweet, fresh air ; merry bells. Oh, glorious, glorious !

"What's to-day ?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"*Eh* ?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow ?" said Scrooge.

"To-day !" replied the boy. "Why, *Christmas Day.*"

"It's Christmas Day !" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow !"

"Hallo !" returned the boy.

"Do you know the poulterer's in the next street but one, at the corner ?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy !" said Scrooge. "A remarkable boy ! Do you know whether they've sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there—not the little prize turkey—the big one ?"

"What, the one as big as me ?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy !" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck."

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it ?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-*er* !" exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the directions where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown."

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at the trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's," whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim."

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one; but write it he did, somehow, and went downstairs to open the street-door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker! Here's the turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you? Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much ; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humored fellows said, "Good morning, sir. A Merry Christmas to you !" And Scrooge said often afterward, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when, coming on toward him, he beheld the portly gentleman who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe ?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"My dear sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both hands, "how do you do ? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir !"

"Mr. Scrooge ?"

"Yes," said Scrooge, "that is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness—" Here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"Lord bless me !" cried the old gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious ?"

"If you please," said Scrooge. "Not a farthing less. A great many back payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favor ?"

"My dear sir," said the other, shaking hands with him. "I don't know what to say to so much munifi——"

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge. "Come and see me. Will you come and see me ?"

"I will !" cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

"Thank'ee," said Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you !"

He went to church, and walked about the streets and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted the children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon he turned his steps toward his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it.

"Is your master at home, my dear ?" said Scrooge to the girl. "Nice girl—very."

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my love ?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up-stairs, if you please."

"Thank'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in round the door. They were looking at the table, which was spread out in great array, for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred !" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started ! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner on the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it on any account.

"Why, bless my soul !" cried Fred, "who's that ?"

"It's I—your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred ?"

Let him in ! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, wonder-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late ! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did. The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the tank.

His hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter, too. He was on his stool in a jiffy, driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo !" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day ?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are !" repeated Scrooge. "Yes, I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry, yesterday sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the tank again, "and therefore I am about to raise your salary."

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a straight-waistcoat.

"A Merry Christmas, Bob !" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year ! I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob ! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit."

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more ; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became

as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them ; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset ; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with spirits, but lived upon the total abstinence principle, ever afterwards ; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us ! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one

A. PREPARATORY WORK.

PLACE OF THE CHRISTMAS CAROL IN LITERATURE

I. Place of the Christmas Carol in Literature.

Note 1. In 1843 Dickens began to write his Christmas stories, of which it is difficult to speak without exaggeration. The most wholly beautiful production of Dickens is, perhaps, his *Christmas Carol*. If ever any individual story warmed a Christmas hearth, that was the one; if ever solitary self was converted by a book, and made to be merry and childlike at that season, "when its blessed Founder was himself a child," he surely was by that.

"We are all charmed with your Carol," wrote Lord Jeffrey to its author, "chiefly, I think, for the genuine goodness which breathes all through it, and is the true inspiring angel by which its genius has been awakened. . . . You should be happy yourself; for, to be sure, you have done more good, and not only fastened more kindly feelings, but prompted more positive acts of benevolence by this little publication, than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals since Christmas, 1842." Perhaps not that; but the story filled many old hearts with the vigorous youth of charity, and thrilled young souls with a sympathetic love of man, that drew them nearer to God.—*From The London Review, 1867.*

Note 2. There are four more Christmas books. *The Chimes*, and *The Cricket on the Hearth*, almost equal to the Carol; and *The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man*, which have never been as popular as the first three.

B. FIRST READING.

THE NARRATIVE; STUDY OF THE TEXT

I. The Narrative.

1. Outline of the Narrative.

a. Introduction.

(1) Time and place of action.

Note 3. London, 1843.

(2) Opening scene.

Note 4. The opening paragraphs disclose Scrooge, the partner, executor, and heir of old Jacob Marley, Stock-Broker, sitting in his dingy office.

(3) Characterization of Scrooge.

Suggestion 1. Explain the terms "executor," "administrator," "assign," "legatee." What is the effect of the repetition of the word "sole" in paragraph 4? What is the first hint given that Marley and Scrooge were very unpleasant people? Describe the means used to emphasize the statement that Marley was dead. What is the meaning of the sentence, "They often came down handsomely, but Scrooge never did"?

b. The Story.

(1) *Stave I.*

(*a*) Conversation I, Scrooge and his nephew.

(1) Their ideas of Christmas.

(2) Point of the conversation.

Note 5. This conversation brings out the *motif* of the story, and also strengthens the impression already given of the character of Scrooge.

(*b*) Conversation II, Scrooge and the philanthropists.

Suggestion 2. What is the point of this conversation?

(*c*) The carol ; closing the warehouse.

(*d*) Conversation III, Scrooge and his clerk.

Suggestion 3. Give the clerk's idea of Christmas.

(*e*) Conversation IV, Scrooge and Marley's Ghost.

Suggestion 4. Reproduce the conversation. From this dialogue what do you learn of the characters of Marley and Scrooge?

(2) *Stave II.*

(*a*) The ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to the days of his youth ; shows him what Christmas was to him when a schoolboy, and when he was an apprentice; reminds him of the young girl whom he once wooed, and whom he neglected as he grew rich; and shows him that sweetheart of his youth married to another, and the mother of a happy family.

(3) *Stave III.*

(*a*) The ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the joyous home of his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who has nine people to keep on a salary of fifteen shillings a week, and yet can find the means to make merry on Christmas. It also shows him the family of his nephew; and reveals to him the fact that the Christmas spirit is abroad everywhere.

Suggestion 5. What effect have these visions upon Scrooge? How is the lameness of Tiny Tim brought to the notice of the reader? Would the statement have been as pathetic had the lameness been directly asserted? Why did the father's voice tremble when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong? What occurrence at the party of Scrooge's nephew had the most softening effect upon Scrooge? What is the allegorical interpretation of the Spirit's torch?

(4) *Stave IV.*

(*a*) The Ghost of Christmas To Come shows Scrooge that if he died as he then was he would become the prey of thieves and beggars, the jest of his business acquaintances and the world's uncared-for waif.

(*b*) Conclusion.

(1) These visions wholly change Scrooge's nature, and he becomes benevolent, charitable, and cheerful, loving all and by all beloved.

Suggestion 6. State the circumstances under which the following occur to Scrooge: (1) His words to the benevolent gentleman regarding the surplus population; the churlish manner in which he gave his clerk Christmas day for a holiday; the little boy who sang a Christmas carol at his door; his words to his nephew.

II. Study of the Text.

1. Glimpses of the London of Dickens' Day.

a. Manners and customs.

(1) Provisions for the London poor.

(2) Candles, links, lamplighters.

(3) Dress, wigs, etc.

(4) Bake shops.

Note 6. The closing of these bake shops on Sunday was a popular grievance.

(5) Corporation, aldermen, livery.

(6) "Sir Roger de Coverley."

Note 7. The "Sir Roger de Coverley" was a popular contra dance in England in the early part of the last century. It was said to take its name from a knight of the reign of Richard I., noted for his hospitality and for the number and excellence of the Harpers whom he kept. This dance is known in Canada as the "Virginia Reel."

b. Words and expressions peculiarly English.

Suggestion 7. How would you express the ideas contained in the following sentences?

(1) Fifteen shillings a week.

(2) The clocks had only just gone three.

(3) He boasted no great-coat.

(4) Brave in ribbons.

(5) Butter boats.

(6) In the copper.

(7) Poulterers' shops.

(8) He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner.

c. Colloquialisms.

Suggestion 8. Give the context for the following and explain each. With how many of these expressions are you familiar?

(1) Tight fisted hand at the grindstone.

(2) Came down handsomely.

(3) Nuts to Scrooge.

(4) Hard as he could pelt.

(5) Dead as a door-nail.

Note 8. The door-nail is the plate or knob on which the knocker or hammer strikes. As this nail is knocked on the head several times a day, it cannot be supposed to have much life left in it.—*Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.*

(6) Cracking jokes.

(7) Before a man can say Jack Robinson.

Note 9. *i.e.*, Immediately. It is said that this saying had its birth from a very volatile gentleman of that name, who used to pay flying visits to his neighbors, and was no sooner announced than he was off again.

(8) Equal to the time of day.

Note 10. Time of day = the latest aspect of affairs.

(9) Fifteen bob a week.

(10) Walker.

Note 11. An ejaculation of incredulity. The origin of the expression is thus explained: John Walker was an outdoor clerk at Cheapside, London, whose office was to keep the workmen to their work or report them to the principals. Of course it was for the interest of the employees to throw discredit on Walker's reports, and the poor old man was so bothered and ridiculed that the firm found it politic to abolish the office; but "Walker" still signifies that a tale is not to be believed.—*Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.*

Suggestion 9. *Note that as the story proceeds the author grows more and more earnest and absorbed in his theme, and that these slang phrases, found in the first stave, disappear in the later chapters.*

2. Allusions.

Suggestion 10. *Identify and give context for each.*

a. Hamlet's father.

b. The Prophet's rod.

c. The Star that led the Wise Men, etc.

d. Ali Baba.

e. Valentine and Orson.

Note 12. Valentine and Orson were twin sons of Bellisant and Alexander, Emperor of Constantinople. They were born in a forest near Orleans ; and, shortly after their birth, one was carried off by a bear. While the mother was gone to hunt for him, the other child was found by King Pepin, who adopted him, and named him Valentine, because he was found on St. Valentine's Day. The first child grew up, a savage, among the wild beasts of the forest ; and under the name of "The Wild Man of the Woods," became the terror of the surrounding country. When Valentine was grown, he asked that his first feat of arms might be a combat with the Wild Man. Permission was given, the two brothers met, and after a desperate struggle, Valentine overcame his antagonist, whom he carried to court and presented to the King.

With loss of blood and loss of strength
The savage tamer grew ;
And to Sir Valentine became
A servant, tried and true.

And 'cause with bears he erst was bred,
Ursine they called his name ;
A name which unto future times
The Muses shall proclaim.

—*Percy's Reliques.*

When Valentine was twenty years of age, a youthful knight taunted him with his doubtful parentage ; whereupon Valentine, accompanied by his faithful squire, set out to find his mother. His quest was successful ; and, his mother found, the fact that Valentine and Orson were brothers was revealed.

f. St. Dunstan and the Evil Spirit.

Note 13. St. Dunstan was a painter, jeweler, and blacksmith. Being expelled from court, he built a cell near Glastonbury Church, and there he worked at his handicrafts. Tradition says that one day Satan had a conversation with the saint through the lattice window of this cell. Dunstan went on talking until his tongs were red hot, when he turned around suddenly and caught the Evil Spirit by the nose.

g. Spanish friars.

h. The Sultan's Groom; Robinson Crusoe; Friday.

Suggestion 11. For the stories of Ali Baba and the Sultan's Groom see the Arabian Nights.

3. Pictures.

Suggestion 12. Enumerate all the details which enter into the composition of these pictures.

a. Portraits.

(1) Marley's Ghost.

(2) Scrooge in his counting room; Scrooge sipping his gruel before his meagre fire; Scrooge after his reformation.

(3) Marley's Ghost.

(4) The three spirits.

(5) Bob Cratchit.

(6) Peter.

(7) Scrooge's nephew.

(8) Scrooge's niece by marriage.

(9) Mrs. Fezziwig.

(10) Tiny Tim.

b. Tableaux.

(1) Bob and Tiny Tim.

(2) Bringing in the Pudding.

(3) In the Junk Shop.

(4) Scrooge announcing to Bob that his salary is to be raised.

(5) Christmas in the miner's hut.

c. Miscellaneous Pictures.

(1) The Clerk's fire.

(2) Christmas Eve in London.

(3) The Transformed Knocker.

(4) The Fruiterers' Shops.

(5) The Phantoms.

Note 15. If there is any one thing of a material nature that Dickens excels in describing it is good things to eat. The Carol is full of examples of this, as : *The Dinner at Bob Cratchit's*, etc.

C. SECOND READING.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE STORY; LITERARY EXCELLENCES

I. Construction of the Story.

1. The Plot. The reformation of Scrooge.
   - *a.* Agencies used to develop this plot.
     - (1) Marley's Ghost.
     - (2) The three spirits.
   - *b.* Characters used in the development of the story.
     - (1) Scrooge, Marley, Fred, Fred's wife, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, Mrs. Cratchit, Peter, Martha, the benevolent gentleman, the Fezziwigs, Dick Wilkins, Topper, Mrs. Dilber, Joe, the boy in Sunday clothes, "*The owner of one scant young nose.*"

Suggestion 13. State the part played by each in the development of the story. Which of these characters are real actors in the narrative, and which belongs to Scrooge's visions?

   - *c.* The contrasts of the story used to emphasize the plot.
     - (1) Scrooge, the wretched old man, sipping his gruel before his solitary hearth; and Scrooge, the dreamy boy, reading his Arabian Nights in the deserted school-room.

(2) Scrooge, the taskmaster, begrudging coals to his meek clerk; and Scrooge, the merry apprentice, at the Fezziwigs' ball.

(3) Scrooge, the miser of Stave I.; and Scrooge, the benevolent old gentleman of Stave V.

2. Scenes of the Story.
   a. Droll.
   b. Pathetic.
   c. Commonplace.

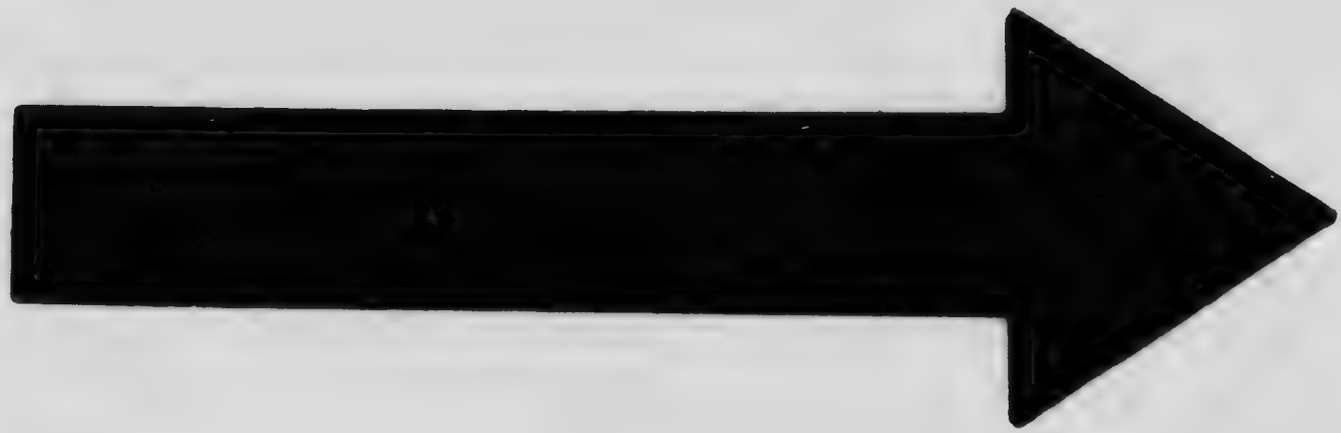
Suggestion 14. Group all the scenes of the story under these three heads.

3. Arrangement of the Story.
   a. Stave I. Plot Definitely Stated.
   b. Stave II. Shows the hold which the memories of childish pleasures have even upon the imagination of selfish old age.
   c. Stave III. The Author's Message in Allegory.
   d. Stave IV. "In Stave IV. the imaginary death of Tiny Tim forms a companion piece to the imaginary death of Scrooge, and the exquisite tenderness of the one is finely set off by the ghastly circumstances of the other." These two scenes complete the reformation of Scrooge.
   e. Stave V. Reveals the Fact that it was all a Dream.

Suggestion 15. Why is the word "stave" used instead of "chapter"?

4. Purpose of the Story. The Plea of the Poor against the Rich.

Note 16. **This purpose is evident in all of Dickens' work.**



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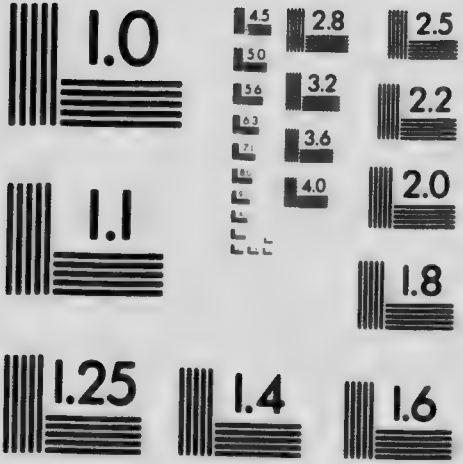

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5. Text of the Story. Kindliness.

Note 17. The moral application of this little sermon on kindliness is summed up in two of the sentences spoken to the terror-stricken Scrooge by the ghost of Jacob Marley : (1) *It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow men . . . . . and turned to happiness ;* (2) *No space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused.*

Suggestion 16. Learn both passages.

6. The Hero of the Story.

a. Scrooge's history.

(1) His boyhood.

(2) Early manhood.

(3) Middle age.

(4) Later life.

b. His appearance, manner, evil eye, attitude toward his fellow men.

c. His character.

Suggestion 17. Note that his very name tells the reader that he is "a squeezing, grasping, scraping, wrenching, clutching, covetous" old miser. Summarize in your own words the forbidding traits of Scrooge. What masterly touch in Dicken's description of Scrooge most forcibly reveals his nature? Give Mrs. Cratchit's opinion of Scrooge.

II. Literary Excellences of the Christmas Carol.

1. Noted for its character delineations and descriptions.

Suggestion 18. Note particularly the characterization of Mrs. Fezziwig ; the description of Bob Cratchit ; the description of the Cratchits' Christmas dinner, of the Fezziwig ball, of the game at Blind Man's Buff, of the journey with the Ghost of Christmas Present, etc.

2. Full of beauty, tenderness, pathos, sweetness, kindness, charity, and good-will.
3. Great fidelity to detail and a fine conception of moral beauty are apparent in its composition.
4. Characterized by vigorous English, reinforced by sympathy and humor, by a drollery as refreshing as it is unexpected, and by a fierce indignation against wrong.
5. A hearty, inspiring, wholesome tale.
6. " No other story teller has seized the real value and meaning of Christmas as thoroughly as Dickens has done."
7. For more than half a century *The Christmas Carol* has kept its popularity ; no other story in the whole realm of fiction has its perennial interest and vitality.
8. " Dickens had the keenest eye for oddity that ever looked out on this odd world."

Suggestion 19. Verify this criticism by collecting the figures of speech in the text and noting all the author's fanciful comparisons and observations. For example : The young house playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, etc.; Apostles putting off to sea in butter boats ; He iced his office in dog days, etc.

D. THIRD READING.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL, A CHRISTMAS SERMON

I. The Christmas Spirit of the Story.

1. Characterizations of Christmas.
   - *a.* A good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time in the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.
   - *b.* A time of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices.
2. Christmas spirit of the poem.
   - *a.* The Christmas feeling in the foggy, icy streets of London.
   - *b.* The universal Christmas spirit,—the song in the miner's hut, the good-fellowship in the wave-lashed lighthouse; and the Christmas thoughts in the hearts of the sailors far out at sea.

Note 18. Notice that while Scrooge is the hero of the story, Tiny Tim is the principal character in the sermon; for it is he who is the exponent of the Christmas spirit. He hopes the people saw him in church, be-

cause he is a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see. It is he, too, who embodies in one sentence the wish that should be in every one's heart on Christmas Day,—"*God bless us all, every one.*"

3. The proper frame of mind in which to celebrate Christmas.
   a. To have a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; to remember those one cares for, and to know that they remember us. (*Stave III.*)
   b. *It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.*
4. A Christmas Eve in London.
5. Christmas games and Christmas observances referred to in the text.

E. SUPPLEMENTARY WORK.

ANCIENT CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS; CHARLES DICKENS; THEME SUBJECTS

I. Ancient Christmas Customs.

Suggestion 20. The "Christmas Carol" is so distinctively a Christmas tale and is so filled with allusions to Christmas observances that a study of the manner in which Christmas was celebrated in Merrie England is necessary at this point. Many of these customs are now obsolete, but as literature is filled with allusions to them, they should be understood by every reader.

1. The Christmas Season.

Note 19. The Christmas season lasted twelve days, from December 24 to January 6, the latter being called "Twelfth Day" or Epiphany.

a. "The sacred name and origin of" Christmas Day.

2. Popular Customs.

a. Burning the Yule log.

Suggestion 21. Why is Christmas called the merry "Yule Tide"?

b. Christmas carols.

(1) The first Christmas carol was the hymn sung by the angels on the plains of Bethlehem, says an ancient divine.

(2) The most popular of all the early Christmas carols is that quoted in our text. It contains seven stanzas, of which the first and last are as follows :

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood,
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.

O tidings of comfort and joy
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day.

c. Waits.

d. Mummers.

e. Christmas trees.

Note 20. The Christmas tree and Christmas gifts are modern observances. The ancient custom was to distribute gifts on New Year's Day.

f. Christmas decorations.

Note 21. A quaint old writer thus spiritualizes the practice of Christmas decorations: "So our churches and houses decked with plants which are always green, winter and summer, signify and put us in mind of His Deity, that the child that now was born was God and man, who should spring up like a tender plant, should always be green and flourishing, and live forevermore."

(1) Holly and Mistletoe decorations peculiar to Christmas.

g. Christmas fare: The boar's head, Christmas pie, plum pudding, turkeys and geese.

h. Christmas games and amusements.

3. Christmas traditions.

a. St. Nicholas, Santa Claus, Kris Kringle.

b. The Three Magi.

c. Story of the Mistletoe.

Note 22. For the well-known custom of "kissing under the mistletoe," we are indebted to the following legend : Baldur, the god of love among the Scandinavians, was hated by Loki, the god of evil, but as nothing that sprang from fire, earth, air, or water could harm him, the wicked spirit accomplished the death of Baldur by means of a mistletoe dart. As some reparation for this injury the plant was afterwards dedicated to Baldur's mother, so long as it did not touch earth, Loki's empire. In her hands it became the emblem of love, for everyone who passed under it received a kiss to show that it was no longer the instrument of enmity and death.

d. The Glastonbury Thorn.

Note 23. Among the popular superstitions of the sixteenth century we find the following : (1) The cock crows all night long on Christmas eve and by his vigilance frightens away all malignant spirits ; (2) At Midnight on Christmas Eve the cattle in their stalls fall down on their knees in adoration of the infant Saviour, in the same manner as the legend reports them to have done in the stable at Bethlehem ; (3) Bees sing in their hives on Christmas Eve ; (4) Bread baked on Christmas never becomes mouldy. Thus all nature was supposed to unite in celebrating the birth of Christ, and to partake in the general joy which the anniversary of the Nativity inspired.

Suggestion 22. Use each of the above headings as the subject of a carefully prepared theme.

II. Charles Dickens.

1. Significant facts in his life.
2. Distinguishing characteristics as a writer.
3. Present popularity.
4. Names of his best known novels.
5. The three great novelists of Dickens' era.

III. Theme Subjects.

1. Each Heading under *E*, *I*.
2. The Life History of Scrooge.
3. The Story of Tiny Tim.
4. The Cratchit Family.
5. The Cratchits' Christmas Dinner.
6. The Christmas Spirit Everywhere Abroad.
7. Dickens' Conception of the Meaning of Christmas.
8. The Feelings which Christmas Should Inspire.
9. Scene between Bob Cratchit and Scrooge in Stave V.
10. Scrooge's Nephew. A Character Study.
11. A London Fog.
12. Lessons Learned from *The Christmas Carol*.

NOTES

PAGE 7. *Carol.*—A song or ballad of rejoicing, usually sung by choruses of children at the Christmas and Easter festivals. Christmas carols are commemorative of that first Christmas song sung by the angels at the birth of Christ. In the early days of the Christian Church the bishops and clergy were accustomed to sing carols, play games, and indulge in other festivities on Christmas Day. On page 15 are the opening lines of a favorite and beautiful English carol.

PAGE 8. *Staves.*—A corruption of the plural of *staff*. Used here in the sense of stanza or metrical division. (As a carol is a poem divided into stanzas, so Dicken's *Christmas Carol in prose* has its divisions or *staves*.)

PAGE 8. *'Change.*—Contraction for *exchange*, and it refers to the Royal Exchange in London, a building devoted to the vast interests of commerce. The chief business hours are from 3.30 to 4.30 p.m., and the most important days are Tuesdays and Fridays. The expression here used is equivalent to saying that Scrooge's business credit was excellent.

PAGE 14. *Union Workhouse.*—This is a workhouse supported and governed by a union of two or more parishes. The early life of Oliver Twist was spent in a union workhouse.

PAGE 14. *Links.*—Torches made of tow and pitch, and carried about by "link-boys," as they were called. Before the days of gas, links were very common in Great Britain, and they are still used in London in the dense fogs so prevalent in that city.

PAGE 15. *Saint Dunstan.*—Son of a Saxon noble, born about 924, and educated at the Abbey of Glastonbury and at the court of Canterbury. He became a monk, and afterwards, Archbishop of Canterbury. He was for his time a fine scholar, a shrewd statesman, and an artist of no mean ability, being a painter, a musician, and a skilled worker in metals.

PAGE 15. *Half-a-crown.*—A crown is a coin so called because it bears upon one side the representation of a crowned head or monarch. The English crown is worth five shillings, or $1.22 in Canadian money. Half-a-crown is half the value of a crown.

PAGE 16. *Cornhill.*—A crowded thoroughfare in London, which takes its name from the fact that a corn market used to be held there. It leads from the Poultry, where the Mansion House is, to Leadenhall Street, and right past the Exchange on its south side.

PAGE 16. *Camden Town.*—In its early history a small village outside and to the north of London, now one of the districts of the city itself. During Charles Dickens' youth, and while his father was financially embarrassed, the Dickens family lived in Camden Town.

PAGE 21. *Wise Men.*—According to St. Matthew 2 : 1, 2, wise men, led by the Star of Bethlehem, came from the East to Jerusalem to do honor to the infant Saviour. In a tradition of the second century they are said to have been kings, and later the names Melchior, Kaspar, and Balthazar became attached to them. They were known as the *magi*, the *Three Kings*, and the *Wise Men*. In paintings the youngest of them is represented as a Moor.

PAGE 28. *Deal forms.*—Long benches used in English schools and made of deal or the wood of the fir tree, sometimes called in England the *deal tree*.

PAGE 29. *Ali Baba.*—Is the poor wood-carrier in The Forty Thieves, a story of the *Arabian Nights*. It was Ali Baba who learned by accident the magical words, "Open, Sesame," and so obtained entrance to the robbers' cave.

PAGE 29. *Damascus.*—This refers to the tale of *Noor Ad Deen Ali and Buddir Addeen Houssun*, in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

PAGE 29. *What's his name?*—Is Bedreddin Hassan in one of the tales of the *Arabian Nights*.

PAGE 29. *Sultan's Groom*—Is the hump-backed groom of the Sultan who was prevented by genii from marrying that princess, who afterward became the wife of the Bedreddin already referred to.

PAGE 39. *Twelfth-cakes.*—Twelfth day, or the Epiphany, is so called because it occurs twelve days after Christmas, or on January 6th. The object of the festival, which is next to that of Christmas in popularity, is to do honor to the Wise Men, as the first of the pagans to whom the birth of the Saviour was announced—Epiphany meaning manifestation or appearance. Twelfth-cakes are prepared for the festivities of Twelfth-Night, into each cake a bean being introduced. The cake being divided by lot, whoever receives the piece containing the bean, is bean king, or master of ceremonies.

PAGE 39. *Giant.*—Santa Claus.

PAGE 39. *Plenty's horn.*—Ceres, the goddess of agriculture, is represented as bearing under her left arm a ram's horn filled with flowers and fruit : hence horn of plenty or cornucopia (*cornu*—horn, *copia*—plenty).

PAGE 42. *Bob.*—A slang term for a shilling, which is about 24 cents in Canadian money.

PAGE 46. *Half-a-quartern.*—Quartern is one-fourth of a pint, or a gill.

PAGE 55. *Whitechapel.*—A district in London inhabited principally by artisans.

PAGE 67. *Laocoon.*—A Trojan priest of Apollo, who, with his two young sons, was enveloped and bitten to death by serpents, which came up out of the sea. A famous group in marble, representing the serpents coiled about their victims, was sculptured in the fifth century, discovered in 1506, and is now in the Vatican at Rome.

PAGE 68. *Walk-er !*—A slang term expressing surprise and disbelief.